

ARIZONA Planning Bulletin



Statewide Land Use Plan
Amendment for Fire and Fuels Management

Bureau of Land Management

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Planning for Fires and Fuels Management

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Arizona State Office, has recently completed an evaluation of its existing Land Use Plans (LUPs) and found that the plans do not meet BLM's goal of having a consistent approach to incorporating the National Fire Policy in land use plans. The LUPs need to be revised to address today's wildland fire management concerns and issues, including the following:

- ❑ The use of prescribed fire as a management tool for achieving resource management objectives, including the return of fire as a process to fire dependent ecosystems;
- ❑ Hazardous fuels as an issue, and the use of prescribed fire, mechanical treatment, biological, and/or chemical treatments to reduce and/or manage hazardous fuels;
- ❑ Hazardous fuels in the Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) and associated issues, and the various tools to approach these issues, with a goal of reducing hazardous wildland fuel accumulations;
- ❑ Appropriate Management response, including managing natural fire starts for resource benefit;
- ❑ A Statewide Programmatic Emergency Fire Rehabilitation Plan; and
- ❑ Air Quality, and how it will be affected by the reintroduction of fire to the ecosystem as a natural process.

The BLM is beginning the process to amend its six Resource Management Plans (the Phoenix, Kingman, Arizona Strip, Safford, Yuma, and Lower Gila South

RMPs) and one Management Framework Plan (the Lower Gila North MFP). Amendments to these LUPs will then allow the Field Office fire management plans to be updated.

The process of amending BLM's LUPs requires analysis under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in accordance with BLM planning requirements (43 CFR 1600), policies and handbooks. An Environmental Assessment (EA) will be prepared to identify and analyze the potential impacts of the proposed LUP amendments on cultural and natural resources. The BLM has selected the Dynamac Corporation and The Nature Conservancy to assist the Bureau in the LUP amendment and EA process.

To ensure that the most appropriate measures of managing wildland fire in Arizona are selected from numerous options and alternatives, public input into the LUP Amendment process is essential. The BLM wants to take this opportunity to meet with and hear your views on wildland fire management, including reintroducing fire into the natural ecosystem. Over the next year, you will be presented with several opportunities to comment on all of the above issues, have your questions answered, and tell BLM your concerns regarding the LUP amendment. We encourage you to take as much advantage of these opportunities as you possibly can, and tell us about the issues that are most important to you.

We hope to see you at an upcoming meeting.

What Does BLM Hope to Achieve by Amending its LUPs?

- **Improve public and firefighter safety.** Reduce the need for repeated fire fighting efforts in the same localities and reduce the risk of wildland fires near communities (WUI fires).
- **Adaptive fire suppression response strategy.** Prioritize firefighting needs and allocate people and equipment to efficiently manage concurrent fires. Allow for fire management to change as resource conditions change, considering tactical response, resource condition (e.g., plant community, wildlife habitat), and goals for desired conditions.
- **Hazardous fuels treatments.** Reduce unnatural accumulations of hazardous wildland fuels in forest, woodland, and rangeland communities to restore more natural conditions using prescribed fire, biological, chemical, and/or mechanical methods. Develop management actions for hazardous fuels in the WUI.
- **Maintain or enhance vegetation.** Establish objectives to properly use and/or suppress fire to maintain or restore vegetation, apply vegetation treatments to restore habitat previously lost in wild-fires, and improve the health of remaining habitats.
- **Integrate emergency stabilization, rehabilitation, fuels management, and rangeland health.** Prevent soil erosion and invasive species encroachment in previously burned areas.
- **Wildland fire in natural ecosystems.** Wildland fire is a necessary component of fire-adapted ecosystems. Where appropriate, reintroduce fire with prescribed burns and revise full suppression fire policies to allow prescribed natural fire.



What are Some of the Resource Issues of Concern?

Prescribed burns

- How will prescribed burns be managed to ensure that they do not escalate out of control?
- Will BLM alert me of plans to conduct a prescribed burn? How will I be notified?
- How will BLM decide where and when to conduct a prescribed burn?

Naturally Ignited Fires

- How will BLM determine if a naturally ignited fire is allowed to burn?
- How will naturally ignited fires be managed to ensure that they do not escalate out of control?

Hazardous fuels and treatment techniques

- What treatment techniques will be used to reduce the buildup of hazardous fuels?
- How do I tell BLM or other agencies about hazardous fuels in my area?

Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI)

- How will BLM coordinate among city fire departments, rural fire districts, BLM fire personnel, and state and other federal agencies to manage wildland fires and prescribed burns on public lands?
- How will BLM enforce public and firefighter safety while protecting natural resources, historic properties, and private property?
- What is the best way of implementing the National Fire Plan and forming cooperative agreements between BLM and other Stakeholders?


Natural Resources Preservation, Restoration, and Wildlife Habitat Protection

- How will soils be managed in recently burned areas to prevent erosion?
- How will BLM ensure that the habitat of threatened and endangered species are protected?
- How will invasive species and noxious weed encroachment be controlled?

Air and Water Quality

- How will the reintroduction of wildland fire into the ecosystem affect air and water quality?
- How will fire, fuels, and related vegetation management activities be conducted to best protect air and water quality?
- How will BLM ensure compliance with federal air and water quality regulations?

Ways You Can Participate

Schedule	Planning Activity	Public Participation Opportunities
December 2002- March 2003 We are Here!! 	1. Set the Stage for Planning and Management The first step is to lay the foundation for everything that will be done in the LUP Amendment and, ultimately, "on the ground." Statements of purpose and significance are reviewed to ensure that everything we do is consistent with the reasons the LUP will be amended. Issues and concerns that need to be addressed in the LUP amendment are identified. This helps to focus our work and determine the scope of the planning effort.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in scoping meetings, to occur in March 2003 (dates and locations are listed on the next page). • Read and comment on newsletter. • Return enclosed comment sheet.
Summer 2003	2. Gather Data and Develop Alternatives The BLM, TNC, and Dynamac's planning team will be working to better understand the resources, learn more about issues, identify opportunities for solving problems, and develop ideas for the future. Concepts for alternatives will be generated. These are broad descriptions of different resource conditions and land-user experiences that could achieve the LUP amendment's purposes and maintain its significance. Management strategies for achieving these alternatives will also be developed, and the potential environmental consequences of implementing each alternative will be evaluated. The Environmental Consequences chapter of the EA will be presented to BLM and Citizen Coalition Groups for review and comment in July 2003.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in data-gathering meetings. • Read and comment on second newsletter, to be published in April 2003. • Read and comment on the Environmental Consequences Chapter of the EA.
October 2003	3. Publish Draft Proposed LUP Amendment / EA / FONSI The Draft Proposed LUP Amendment/EA/FONSI will be completed and available on the Internet for Public Review. Notice of its publication will be published in the Federal Register via a Notice of Availability (NOA), and another Newsletter, on October 1, 2003. You will be called on to comment upon the Drafts in meetings held state-wide throughout the month of October 2003.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in presentation and commentary meetings, to be held in the seven BLM districts in October 2003. • Read and comment on the Draft Proposed LUP Amendment/EA/FONSI • If desired, submit formal protest
January 31, 2004	4. Publish Final LUP Amendment / EA / FONSI / Record of Decision Based on public comments, obtained from the final round of meetings, appropriate revisions to the draft will be made and a <i>Final LUP Amendment/EA/FONSI/Record of Decision</i> will be developed.	
January 2004 and Beyond	5. Plan Implementation	

Public Meetings in an open house format will be held in the following communities:

City	Location	Date	Time
St. George	BLM Arizona Strip Field Office Conference Center 345 East Riverside Drive, St. George, UT	March 3, 2003	6 p.m. to 9 p.m.
Lake Havasu City	Lake Havasu City Parks and Recreation Department Community Center 100 Park Avenue, Lake Havasu City, AZ	March 4, 2003	6 p.m. to 9 p.m.
Kingman	Kingman Chamber of Commerce 120 W. Andy Devine, Kingman, AZ	March 5, 2003	6 p.m. to 9 p.m.
Yuma	BLM Yuma Field Office Conference Room 2555 E. Gila Ridge Road, Yuma, AZ	March 6, 2003	6 p.m. to 9 p.m.
Safford	Eastern Arizona College Activity Center, Gila/ Galiuro Room; Highway 70 and College Avenue, Thatcher, AZ	March 10, 2003	6 p.m. to 9 p.m.
Tucson	Arizona Game and Fish Department 555 N. Greasewood Rd., Tucson, Arizona	March 11, 2003	6 p.m. to 9 p.m.
Phoenix	Deer Valley Community Center 2001 West Wahalla Lane (One block south of the Intersection of 19th Avenue and Loop 101), Phoenix, AZ	March 12, 2003	6 p.m. to 9 p.m.
Flagstaff	Northern Arizona University, Dubois Center	March 13, 2003	6 p.m. to 9 p.m.

For More Information on the LUP Amendment Process:

Updated information on the LUP Amendment and environmental assessment process will be posted on the BLM Arizona State Offices Internet site as it becomes available. The Internet address is: www.az.blm.gov (under "What We Do," click "Land Use Planning").

If you have other questions or would like more specific information, please contact:

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